

Issy les Moulineaux, the 13th of May, 2016

The turn of the ambitious

The Afrikaia Merzouga Rally will be held from 21-27 May. 122 professionals and amateurs will battle in this Dakar Series event that will take place between the Merzouga Dunes. Runner-up in this year's Dakar, Stevan Sivtko as well as the two revelations of 2016, Kevin Benavides and Adrien van Beveren, (4th and 5th) are among the favourites for this 7th edition.

Ideally situated at the start of the season, the Afrikaia Merzouga Rally is now, thanks to its position change on the racing calendar, a significant test in the professional riders' 2016 campaign. A large contingent of the sport's best are entered to gauge and affirm their objectives. Besides the Sivtko-Benavides-Van Beveren trio, Gerard Farrés, Helder Rodrigues and Rubén Farria also have high hopes. But in the perspective of next year's Dakar the youngsters and rookie riders threaten to create a shift in the hierarchy or at least add some excitement. In their sights: gain experience on the major rallies and aim as quickly as possible at a participation in the Dakar. The battle between the established riders and the next wave of New Dakar Generation riders will be thrilling, with the Dakar Challenge (saving his registration for the Dakar 2017) prize going to the winner as well as the best finishing junior competitor. What better way to motivate the aspirants.

In line with the six previous editions, the rally remains true to its philosophy of being a friendly event where proper amateur riders can experience a human and sporting challenge at their own pace. To hang out with the top pro riders, to get useful advice from the old hands and compete on suitable routes was what Sporting Director Marc Coma wanted to create for the Afrikaia Merzouga Rally. The rally has also managed to become an important training rally, another quality of the event. These are strong arguments for each enthusiast to get a real sense of rally atmosphere as well as set off on his own challenge.

122 competitors entered

- **80** motorcycles in the Pro category
- **23** quads in the Pro category
- **3** motorcycles in the expert category (75% of route distance)
- **16** SSV

- **24** Nationalities (top 5 nationalities France 32 % – Spain 12 % – Portugal 9 % – Italy 9%)
- **5** women: 2 female teams in SSV + 1 female co-driver
- The youngest co-driver in SSV is **18** years old (mother & daughter team)
- The youngest in the Moto-Pro category is **21** years old
- **53** competitors have never participated in the Dakar (43%)
- **37** have already competed in the Dakar but are participating in the Merzouga for the first time. (30%)
- **32** competitors have already competed in the Merzouga Rally (26%)

Registration, rates and calendar on www.merzougarally.com

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